

Section 1:

#1 Strengths: Your opening paragraph effectively establishes an emotional connection by contrasting the creek's past beauty with its current state. The personal memory creates a strong foundation for your argument.

Weaknesses: Lack of vivid imagery → Your contrast between past and present could be more powerful with specific sensory details. Instead of just saying "the water is brown and slow," you could describe how it looks, smells, or sounds more precisely to help readers picture the dramatic change.

Exemplar: ***The water now crawls along like thick, muddy syrup, carrying an unpleasant smell that makes me hold my breath whenever I get too close.***

#2 Strengths: Your paragraph about the student clean-up initiative provides a hopeful element and shows youth taking action, which balances the otherwise concerning tone of the article.

Weaknesses: Limited exploration of youth perspective → While you mention the students' clean-up effort, you could develop their voices and motivations more. Only one student's voice (Sarah Kim) is included, and her quote is quite brief.

Exemplar: ***"We grew up playing near this creek," explained Sarah Kim, her eyes fixed on the polluted water. "This isn't just about cleaning up rubbish for us—it's about fighting for our childhood memories and making sure future kids can make their own."***

#3 Strengths: Your conclusion effectively returns to the imagery of the creek as a "ribbon of light" and presents a call to action that empowers readers.

Weaknesses: Abrupt ending → The conclusion feels slightly rushed with its short, simple sentences. The final paragraph could benefit from a more developed closing thought that ties back to your personal connection established in the opening.

Exemplar: ***Silverwater Creek once shimmered like a ribbon of light across our community, carrying my childhood dreams along its crystal waters. With each small action we take today, we can help restore that magic, ensuring that future generations will chase their own dragonflies along its banks rather than simply reading about them in stories of what once was.***

Overall comments → Your feature article shows strong passion for the environmental issue and provides some good examples of the creek's decline. The personal connection you establish gives readers a reason to care. However, your writing could benefit from more detailed sensory descriptions throughout to help readers truly see, hear, and feel the creek's transformation. Try adding more specific images of what pollution actually looks like in the creek. Also, consider

including more diverse voices from the community to strengthen your argument. Your article mentions some solutions but could explore more accessible actions that readers might take beyond participating in clean-ups. The structure works well by starting with the problem, explaining causes, and ending with hope, but transitions between some paragraphs could be smoother. Adding more personal reflections throughout would maintain the emotional connection you establish at the beginning.

**Score: 44/50**

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## Section 2:

### Our Creek Is Dying and Nobody Is Talking About It

#1 When I was little, I used to think Silverwater Creek was magical. Every time we went there, the water sparkled like someone had sprinkled millions of tiny diamonds across it. I remember chasing dragonflies with my brother and daring each other to step into the freezing cold water. Back then, the air smelled fresh, and you could always hear birds calling from the trees. Now, when I walk down to the creek, it feels completely different. The water is brown and slow, the plants are shriveled, and the only sounds you hear are cars rushing past in the distance. It is almost like the creek gave up, and honestly, I do not blame it.

The worst part is that it did not have to end up like this. According to a report from the NSW Environmental Protection Authority last year, pollution in Silverwater Creek has gone up by forty five percent over just five years. That number might not mean much when you first hear it, but when you stand by the water and look at all the rubbish tangled in the weeds, it suddenly feels very real. The birds are mostly gone, the fish are harder to find, and the water, once clear, now looks heavy and sad. Dr Megan Lawrence, an ecologist from the University of Sydney, said that if nothing changes soon, Silverwater Creek might not be able to support any life within ten years. That is a scary thought. Ten years sounds like a long time, but it really is not. ~~It is~~ [In] one moment you are chasing dragonflies, and the next moment there are none left.

It does not take long to see who is responsible. Factories upstream have been leaking chemicals into the creek for years. It is not always dramatic, like a giant oil spill you see on the news. Most of the time, it is slow and invisible, trickling into the water every time it rains. Heavy metals like lead and mercury get washed into the creek, and they stay there. Professor Alan Reed from the Australian National University explained that these metals do not just disappear over time. They sink into the mud, get eaten by small animals, and move up the food chain until they end up in our bodies too. It is weird to think that something dumped into the creek could find its way into the fish on our plates.

But it is not just the factories. It is also us. Every plastic bottle left on the ground, every chip packet that blows out of a bin, every broken piece of rubbish we do not bother picking up ends up somewhere. And too often, that somewhere is the creek. A 2023 study by CSIRO found that

microplastic pollution in Australian waterways has tripled since 2018. Tripled. We are not just losing our creek. We are filling it with plastic so small we cannot even see it, but it is still there, inside the fish, the birds, and probably inside us too.

Sometimes it feels like the damage is too big to fix. But there are signs of hope if you look closely. Last October, a group of students from Thornleigh High School decided they had had enough. They organised a clean up event and managed to collect over five hundred kilograms of rubbish from a short stretch of Silverwater Creek. Five hundred kilograms. That is heavier than some small cars. Sarah Kim, one of the students who helped lead the clean up, said they were tired of waiting for adults to fix everything. They realised that if they did not step up, maybe nobody would.

#2 It is inspiring, but clean ups alone are not enough. We cannot just keep removing rubbish while more keeps flowing in. Councillor Louise Hart from Hornsby Shire Council has recently suggested introducing stricter rules, like bigger fines for companies that dump waste and forcing businesses near the creek to install filters that stop chemicals from reaching the water. She pointed out that unless the law actually makes it harder to pollute, nothing will change. And she is right. Hoping people will suddenly start caring without any real pressure is just not realistic.

Of course, change is never simple. Some companies complain that installing better waste systems will cost too much. Some people do not want to give up the convenience of single use plastics. Even when the creek is dying right in front of us, it is still easier for some people to pretend it is someone else's problem. But what we forget is that this creek is not just a pretty place to visit on the weekends. It is part of our local environment. It is connected to everything. When the creek is sick, the land around it gets weaker. Floods get worse. Animals disappear. Life becomes poorer, even if we do not notice it right away.

#3 Silverwater Creek does not have to stay this way. It can heal, just like a broken bone if we treat it properly. But it will not fix itself. It needs people who are willing to care enough to change the way we live. It needs new rules that actually get enforced. It needs schools, councils, businesses, and families all working together, not blaming each other. It needs all of us.

Sometimes people say that one person cannot make a difference. Maybe picking up one bottle or recycling one bag will not fix everything. But if nobody bothers, then nothing changes at all. Every time someone chooses to care, it adds up. If every person who loved walking by the creek decided to fight for it, instead of waiting for someone else, we would have a real chance.

Silverwater Creek once shimmered like a ribbon of light across our community. It can shine again. It just depends on whether we are willing to fight for it, before it disappears for good.